

S P E E C H

OF

HON. W. T. WILLEY, OF VIRGINIA,

ON THE

OBJECT OF THE WAR;

DELIVERED

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES, DECEMBER 19 AND 20, 1861.

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# SPEECH.

*Resolved*, That the existing war, forced upon the country by the States in rebellion, without justifiable cause or provocation, was, and is, designed by them to destroy the Union and the Constitution; and their purpose, moreover, was at first, and is now, to disavow and repudiate the fundamental principles of republican government on which our fathers established the Union and the Constitution.

Mr. WILLEY, on introducing the above resolution, said:

Mr. PRESIDENT: The resolution offered by the Senator from New Jersey [Mr. TEN EYCK] a few days ago enunciates, as I think very properly, what are the purpose and motives of the United States in prosecuting this war. The resolution that I now submit enunciates what I conceive to be the motive and purpose of the States in rebellion in precipitating this war upon the country, and in prosecuting it. As I remarked just now, sir, we have in the States in rebellion, in the State which I have the honor to represent, not only the conflict of the sword, but we have also the war of opinion. I think it is appropriate that the Senate and the country should understand what were and are the real motives and purposes of the South in instigating this rebellion; and I propose to submit my views somewhat at length upon this proposition.

Our forefathers, when they threw off their allegiance to the British crown, admitted that a "decent respect to the opinions of mankind required that they should declare the causes which impelled them also to the separation."

They also acknowledged that "Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes;" that revolution was justifiable only when government "became destructive of the ends for which it was instituted among men," such as "the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Having secured the recognition of our national independence, they proceeded to organize a government; and in order "to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to themselves and their posterity, they or-

ained and established the Constitution" under which we have since lived so happily, and prospered so well.

If this "respect to the opinions of mankind" is still to be recognized as obligatory, may we not properly inquire what justification is offered by the insurgents against the Government of the United States for their recent and existing terrible efforts to subvert and overthrow it? What essential right has been infringed or withheld? What intolerable wrong has been threatened or inflicted? In what respect has there been a failure to secure to the citizen the enjoyment of his life, his liberty, or the pursuit of his happiness? When or how has the General Government failed to accomplish any of the great purposes of its organization?

Mr. President, "to err is human." It were idle to claim that either of the two parties now in conflict, or that any of the great parties which have distracted the councils of the country, were wholly inculpable. But the question now is, has anything occurred in the administration of the national Government to justify this rebellion? Has the Federal Government become so destructive of the ends of its institution as to create the right in the people, or any portion of the people, "to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government?" Respectfully appealing to the "opinions of mankind," and inviting the most rigid scrutiny and criticism, I confidently declare that this rebellion is wholly inexcusable.

In what I shall have to say I shall avoid all theoretical and speculative examination of the fitness and adaptation of our system of government for the accomplishment of the purposes for which it was ordained. It has been tried for three fourths of a century, and now there is no necessity or room for speculation. We have the results of actual experiment. And what do they teach? What is the testimony which they bear to the security of the great inalienable right of life in this country? Where has life been more secure than in the United States? I respectfully challenge an answer to this question from the apologists of this rebellion, here or elsewhere. Spread out the map of the world, and designate the nation where the life of



the citizen or subject or serf is more thoroughly protected than was the life of the American citizen prior to this rebellion. Unfold the volume of universal history, and show me the page which records the existence of greater personal security than was enjoyed by the people of the United States. How many millions of our people, twelve months ago, in village and hamlet and cottage, slept with doors unbarred, in calm and conscious security, both of life and estate; and when either life or estate was assailed, where and when did there exist a Government more prompt and efficient to avenge the injury?

And as to liberty, what unwarrantable restraint has ever been imposed upon the enjoyment of it? The American citizen worships God everywhere according to the dictates of his own conscience. His religious liberty is incomparable. As a citizen, his rights are equally well defined and secured. His civil liberties were incomparable; and what political franchise or privilege has ever been denied or infringed by the Federal Government? Who, in all these respects, was so happy as the American citizen? Wheresoever the flag of the Republic floated; on every ocean and sea under the whole heavens; wheresoever it marked the residence of the American minister or American consulate; in every city and seaport and town beneath the sun; in the palaces of kings and the cottages of peasants, to earth's remotest boundary, the name of American citizen had become a guarantee of personal and political security and privilege as high and as assured as ever attached to the national character of any human being.

Mr. President, I am touching upon an inspiring theme; but I will not allow myself to be betrayed into a further pursuit of it. I may be allowed to say, however, that while, like all our guilty race, the American citizen inherits the primal curse attaching to our first progenitor, yet no portion of the posterity of Adam ever came so near to the enjoyment of that wide and unrestricted freedom that in the fancy of the great poet fell to the lot of our federal father, as he turned his back upon the gates of Paradise, when

"The world was all before him, where to choose  
His place of rest, and Providence his guide."

My purpose is more practical. It is to appeal to matters of fact known to every intelligent man. It is to challenge the production of an instance in the nomenclature of nations where liberty has been more perfectly secured and enjoyed than it was in the United States, and to demand specifications of those infractions of liberty by the Federal Government which may justify this great rebellion. But I shall challenge in vain. There will be no response to my just demand.

And what shall we say of the pursuit of happiness? Surely that people ought to be happy whose property, person, and life, and whose liberties, civil, religious, and political, are fully secured to them. But, apart from the enjoyment of these great rights, what has been the practical operation of the Government upon the physical condition of the people, and how has it affected the common weal in respect of the merely material interests of the country? Has there been any deficiency here? I again beg to appeal to the facts; I again challenge

a parallel of progress and prosperity. Three quarters of a century have hardly passed away since we entered upon the arena of independent nations. We commenced the war of independence with a population of three million; now we number more than thirty million. In what age, in what clime, shall we find a parallel? We started in the race of national development with thirteen isolated, disconnected, impoverished colonies. When this rebellion broke out, it required the shores of the two oceans to circumscribe our enlarged and consolidated empire. Our commerce burdened every wave of the sea, and filled every port on the globe. We could have proudly defied the world in arms.

Sir, I am not dealing in pictures of fancy. I am not painting with the colors of an unbridled imagination. I am not indulging in figures of speech. I am quoting from the census. I am appealing to recorded facts. Sir, all the fancy belongs to the authors of the rebellion. It is they who are abnegating the results of experience, and are madly rushing after the phantoms of a disordered imagination; deserting the beaten paths of long-attested security and prosperity, to follow the *ignis fatuus* of a frenzied speculation. Nor can it be said that there were any indications of decline in our national prosperity. Down to the very day of the insurrection our growth in population and wealth and power was advancing with a constantly accelerated momentum and progress. And, sir, this remark is as applicable to the seceded States as to any other section of the Confederacy. It will be found that this rebellion was precipitated upon the country when the condition of the South exhibited incontestable evidence of greater prosperity than it had ever done in any previous period of our national existence.

What is the plain deduction from this unexampled national prosperity? Is it not that there could have been no real grievance justifying rebellion?

But we may, with equal confidence, challenge a more minute examination of the policy and administration of the General Government affecting the States in rebellion. And here I do but allege what the records of the country will amply attest, when I say that in the bestowment of official patronage and emolument, and position in every branch of the Government, the South has ever enjoyed an eminently liberal proportion of favor. The journals and acts of Congress will verify the assertion that every important measure of national policy has either originated with southern statesmen, or has been made, sooner or later, essentially to conform to the demands of southern sentiment. This is a broad assertion, but it is true. The South has always exercised a controlling influence in the councils of the Republic. She has had more than an equal share of Presidents; she has had more than a fair proportion of appointments in the Cabinet; the Supreme Court has been adorned with a full quota of her eminent jurists; the *corps diplomatique* has had no just cause of complaint for the want of representatives from south of Mason and Dixon's line; and the glorious annals of our Army and Navy attest on every page the valor and skill of southern chieftains.

But the great outcry of the South against the



North has been predicated principally on alleged grievances respecting slavery. Now, I shall offer no apology for the unfriendly legislation of some of the free States in their distinct capacity. This legislation has sometimes been in direct conflict with the plainest provisions of constitutional law; but the judiciary in every instance, I believe, where a case has arisen under this species of State legislation has declared it to be unconstitutional, and thus rendered it nugatory. Nor will my sense of propriety allow me to do aught else than condemn and denounce the miserable misrepresentation and vituperation of the domestic institutions of the South, which have disgraced in too many instances the northern press and pulpit. But why should the General Government be made responsible for these things? What has it done unfriendly to the South? Look at the facts. The South has always prevailed in questions affecting slavery. For instance: was more efficient legislation required to secure the constitutional right of recovery of fugitives from labor, southern men prepared the law to suit themselves, and it was enacted accordingly. Did fanaticism interpose to rescue the fugitive from the custody of the law, the General Government, with a northern President in the chair of the Executive, enforced the law at the point of the bayonet. The South asked for the Missouri compromise, and got it; and then the South asked for its repeal, and got that. What reasonable demand of the South was ever denied? To the credit and honor of the North, I answer—none! none!

Thus may we speak of the past; but what of the future? The pretense was that the Republican party intended to abolish slavery in the States wherever it existed, or, in some manner, to assail it detrimentally. Mr. President, I am not a member of the Republican party. I opposed to the extent of my poor ability the election of Mr. Lincoln; and I have nothing to regret or to retract. But, sir, I never believed that it contemplated any interference with the domestic institutions of the slave States. Whatsoever else may be obnoxious in the avowed principles, or in the actual administration of the Government by this party, it is not, I think, justly liable to animadversion in this respect. Such a design has been expressly repudiated by every respectable exponent of the Republican party from the commencement of its organization. The fourth resolution in the Chicago platform, on which Mr. Lincoln is elected, explicitly declares:

"That the maintenance inviolate of the rights, and especially the right of each State, to order and control its own domestic institutions according to its own judgment exclusively, is essential to that balance of power on which the perfection and endurance of our political fabric depends."<sup>23</sup>

I have seen nothing in the administration of the Government, as yet, which would warrant any just apprehension of a departure from this avowal of constitutional obligation, and there have not been wanting exigencies to test its fidelity. If anything could cause it to swerve from the right line of constitutional duty on this point, it would be the unholy rebellion of the slave States, which are waging a relentless war upon it. And yet I remember with what supreme satisfaction I read

the proclamation issued to the people of Virginia by General McClellan, when he first entered that Commonwealth, declaring there should be no infringement of the rights of slaveholders, and that all attempts at servile insurrection should be summarily suppressed. I refer with equal satisfaction to the entire unanimity with which Congress, at the last session, resolved that the war, brought upon the country by the South, should be prosecuted with the sole purpose of suppressing the rebellion, and restoring the Government to its legitimate constitutional supremacy, and that when these purposes were accomplished the war should cease.

In harmony with this avowal was the act of Congress for the confiscation of property employed in aiding and supporting the rebellion. The rights of the loyal slaveholder were sedulously guarded, and the determination of the Government not to interfere with the institution of slavery especially manifest. And so it was, when General Fremont, by his proclamation, proposed a different policy, he was promptly rebuked by the President, and commanded to revoke his unauthorized procedure. I might multiply proofs; I cannot forbear to mention another. When General Sherman disembarked his troops at Beaufort, in the very flush of a glorious victory, he does not, as the representative of the Government, forget his constitutional obligation as an officer or as a citizen, but by his proclamation to the people of South Carolina, doing equal credit to his head and his heart, assured even that rebellious State that "he had come among them with no feelings of personal animosity, no desire to harm her citizens, destroy their property, or interfere with any of their lawful rights, or their social and local institutions." General Dix reiterated the same sentiments. And now, sir, the President of the United States, in his late message, crowns these repeated demonstrations of fidelity to the Constitution, with his official sanction and authority. I honor him for it; and pledge to him the support of the loyal citizens of Virginia, so long as he adheres to his present position.

Sir, this apprehension, real or assumed, of unconstitutional aggression upon slavery in the States where it exists, is without reasonable cause.

But it was alleged that there could be no misapprehension of the purpose of the Republican party, by congressional intervention, to exclude the South from carrying their slaves into the Federal Territories. I am sorry to be compelled to admit that this objection is well taken. Now, I am free to declare that by no active agency of mine shall the area of slavery ever be extended. I will never aid in its diffusion. As a slaveholder, believing that under existing circumstances the welfare—moral, physical, and religious—of the African race requires that they should be, for the present at least, kept in bondage, I say this. But sworn as I am to support the Constitution, I will concur in no act which shall deprive any citizen or any section of any constitutional right. Consulting my own opinion of the powers of Congress under the Constitution, I should have had little hesitation in saying that the recognition or the



exclusion of slavery in the Territories was entirely a matter of legislative discretion; and in the exercise of such discretion, I repeat, that by no active agency of mine should slavery ever be established where it had not existed. The Territories are the common heritage of all the people; and I would leave them to be settled by any or all of the people, from every section, without restriction as to the character of the property which they might carry with them. If the slaveholder wanted to go there with his slaves, let him do so, and let him abide the result of the popular determination when the time arrived for the organization of the Territory into a State. Taking the responsibility of carrying his slaves into the Territory, let him encounter the risk of the character of the constitution which may be ordained. Such is my poor view of congressional power in the premises, and of the proper policy to be adopted in the exercise of it. But, sir, my opinion must yield to better authority. The Supreme Court of the United States is the constitutional exponent of disputed principles of constitutional law. As a citizen, and especially as an humble member of this august body, I bow with implicit submission and loyalty to the judgment of this great constitutional arbiter. Sir, in my estimation, any other course will be disastrous in the extreme—prolific of anarchy, and subversive of the foundations and security of all popular government. Submission, unqualified submission, to the arbitrament of the Supreme Court is the great sheet-anchor of our safety. Let it be understood that Congress is not bound by its decisions and interpretations of constitutional law, and what would be the result? The sense of the Constitution would vary with the political complexion of the party in power. To-day it would mean one thing; to-morrow it would mean another. The rights of the people would become the sport of party spirit, and the order and security of society would be convulsed and upheaved, and confusion becoming perpetually worse confounded would ensue, until the whole benefit of established government would be lost.

What if the Supreme Court err in its judgment? This is possible—nay it is probable. But in such case we are not remediless. Let the error be corrected by an amendment of the Constitution in the mode prescribed in that instrument; and let the matter of dubious construction, and the errors of the Supreme Court, be obviated by terms which shall not admit of misconstruction. My Lord Coke, long ago, said in reference to this principle, “certainty is the mother of repose.” We can have no certainty, no repose, no security, no liberty, no good government, unless we abide by the judgment of the judiciary in questions of constitutional law. But, sir, I find myself departing from my purpose not to be drawn into an argument upon abstract principles of government. I come back to the facts and legitimate deductions from facts proving that this rebellion is without justification.

And now, sir, I inquire what has the Republican party done, since the avowal of its policy, to exclude slavery from the Territories? Why, sir, with a decided majority in the other branch of Congress, it has allowed several territorial gov-

ernments to be organized without intervention to exclude slavery. The South was at perfect liberty to emigrate there with their slaves if they thought proper. Will it be a sufficient reply to this fact to allege, as southern politicians have alleged, that this liberality on the part of the North would never have been manifested if it had not been known that the soil and climate of those Territories were of such a character as to practically prevent the existence of slavery there. Grant the fact; what wrong has the North done to the South? Was the North responsible for the climate and soil? Sir, this outcry against the North in regard to these Territories applies only to the God of nature; and, so far as secession is predicated upon the exclusion of slavery from any of the present Territories of the United States, it is a revolt against the inexorable laws of nature and Providence. The spirit which dictated it is akin to the spirit which inspired the angelic revolt in Heaven. May its overthrow be as complete.

But, sir, the South itself being judge, I aver there was in the policy and administration of the General Government in reference to the Federal Territories no just cause of complaint. I need not remind the Senate that this avowal is authoritatively admitted in the official action of southern Senators on this floor. Senators all remember the resolution of Mr. Brown, of Mississippi, offered for the consideration of this body only a few months prior to Mr. Lincoln's election. I will read it:

“Resolved, That experience having already shown that the Constitution and the common law, unaided by statutory provisions, do not afford adequate and sufficient protection to slave property, some of the Territories having failed, others having refused to pass such enactments, it has become the duty of Congress to interpose and pass such laws as will afford to slave property in the Territories that protection which is given to other kinds of property.

“The yeas and nays being demanded on the adoption of this amendment, it was decided in the negative by the following vote:

“YEAS—Messrs. Brown, Johnson of Arkansas, and Mallory—3.

“NAYS—Messrs. Benjamin, Bigler, Bragg, Bright, Chesnut, Clark, Clay, Clingman, Crittenden, Davis, Dixon, Doolittle, Fitzpatrick, Foot, Foster, Green, Grimes, Gwin, Hamlin, Harlan, Hemphill, Hunter, Iverson, Johnson of Tennessee, Lane, Latham, Mason, Nicholson, Pearce, Folk, Powell, Pugh, Rice, Sebastian, Shidell, Ten Eyck, Thompson, Toombs, Trumbull, Wigfall, Wilson, and Yulee—42.”

Every southern Senator, excepting three only, voted against this resolution, thereby acknowledging that down to that day, at least, there was no territorial grievance requiring redress.

Indeed, the act of secession logically implies that the exclusion of slavery from the Territories was not considered to be an intolerable grievance; for secession is a voluntary and final abandonment and surrender to the North of all claim to them by the South.

Mr. President, how utterly absurd are all the pretenses of the insurgents for their rebellion. Granting, for the sake of argument, that the policy and purposes of the Republican party were justly obnoxious to the animadversion which has been heaped upon them, what had the South to fear? If the South had remained loyal to the Government, and its Representatives in this and the other house had remained in their seats, what could



your President or your party have accomplished prejudicial or objectionable to the South? Sir, you were powerless to do us harm. Your President could not have appointed a member of his Cabinet without our concurrence. With a clear majority in both branches of Congress against you and your party, your hands were tied. No minister to a foreign court could have represented this Government against the consent of the South. No law could have been enacted which was not acceptable to the South. The finances, that omnipotent lever of political power, were under the control of the majority opposed to your party and your policy. You were completely dependent on us for the means of administering the Government. Sir, I am recounting facts. And yet, sir, with all the power and control of the Government and of the Republican party in the hands of the South, secession commences. South Carolina recalls her Senators and Representatives in Congress. Mississippi follows her example. Other States tread in their rebellious wake—all crying aloud as they go against the overshadowing power of the North, which was all the time in the minority; till at length by the defection of State after State, our majority here was destroyed, and we of the border States, hitherto secure in our conservative principles, alike aloof from the ultraism of the extremists North and South, and fortified by our majority here, were left in a helpless minority, standing as it were "between the devil and the deep sea." And to-day the so-called confederate States are appealing to the sympathies of the world to rescue them from the persistent oppression of the United States Government!

Sir, these subterfuges were so transparent that the more astute of the conspirators, seeing that they must be convicted by the verdict of reason, and the voice of mankind of duplicity, have boldly avowed that the election of Mr. Lincoln, and the triumph of the Republican party, were not the causes of their rebellion. It became convenient for them to make these things the occasion of it. The careful observer of events might have seen their shadows coming before, twenty-five years ago. The real course of this rebellion I hope to make apparent before I conclude. At present suffice it to say, that it was no sudden, unpremeditated insurrection—it was the result of a deliberate, long-concocted conspiracy; as has been virtually acknowledged by many of the principal conspirators.

We all remember the letter of William L. Yancey, urging the policy of "firing the southern heart," for the purpose of "precipitating" a dissolution of the Union.

In the late convention in South Carolina, most of the leading members expressed themselves in terms of exultation, that the event so long devoutly wished for had been consummated.

Mr. Keitt, a prominent member of the other branch of Congress, declared that he had "been engaged in this movement ever since he entered political life."

Mr. Rhett said:

"It is nothing produced by Mr. Lincoln's election, or the non-execution of the fugitive slave law. It is a matter which has been gathering head for thirty years."

Mr. Inglis said:

"Most of us have had this matter under consideration for the last twenty years."

I might multiply the evidence; but the fact is now unquestionable.

It was necessary to apologize for their withdrawal under some pretense of justification. Hence the dogma of "peaceable secession"—the right of a State to peaceably secede at the pleasure and within the sole discretion of the State seceding! A new theory of our Government was thus propounded to cover the ignominy of the retreating parties. And what an idea of government! What a Union! A Government without authority to maintain itself, and a Union with no obligation or bond to perpetuate it! What a commentary on the wisdom of Washington and Franklin, of Madison and Jefferson! Sir, the Constitution which we have hitherto regarded and revered as the wisest and best plan of government ever devised, turns out, if this dogma of secession be true, to be a mere solecism, a miserable abortion. Under this theory we have a constitutional Government avowedly on its face claiming to form a more perfect Union, yet containing within itself a fundamental principle of its own destruction.

Sir, our Federal Constitution is a farce if this right of secession be admitted. It is a mere caricature of government. It is less efficient than the old Articles of Confederation, which were acknowledged to be a failure. Of the operations of the old Articles of Confederation, Washington wrote to Warren, as follows:

"The Confederation appears to me to be little more than a shadow without the substance, and Congress a nugatory body, their ordinances being little attended to. To me it is a solecism in politics—indeed, it is one of the most extraordinary things in nature—that we should be confederate as a nation, and yet be afraid to give the rulers of that nation—who are creatures of our own making, appointed for a limited and short duration, and who are amenable for every action, and may be recalled at any moment, and are subject to all the evils which they may be instrumental in producing—sufficient powers to order and direct the same. By such policy as this the wheels of Government are clogged, and our brightest prospects, and that high expectation which was entertained of us by the wondering world, are turned into astonishment; and from the high ground on which we stood we are descending into the vale of confusion and darkness."

To James Madison he wrote:

"The consequences of a lax or inefficient Government are too obvious to be dwelt upon. Thirteen sovereignties pulling against each other, and all tugging at the Federal head, will soon bring ruin upon the whole; whereas a liberal and energetic Constitution, well checked and well watched to prevent encroachments, might restore us to that degree of respectability and consequence to which we had the fairest prospect of attaining."

To John Jay he wrote:

"We have errors to correct. We have probably had too good an opinion of human nature in forming our Confederacy. Experience has taught us that men will not adopt and carry into execution measures the best calculated for their own good without the intervention of coercive power. I do not conceive we can exist long as a nation without lodging somewhere a power which will pervade the whole Union in as energetic a manner as the authority of the State governments extends over the several States."

And yet, if it be true that a State may secede at pleasure, Washington, with the sages who cooperated with him in the establishment of the



Federal Constitution, and who professed in their preamble to it to desire and to have provided for a "more perfect union," utterly unconscious of the imbecility and of the true import of his own labors to remedy preëxisting evils, succeeded only in furnishing to his countrymen a constitution of government less efficient and containing less force of national unity and power than the shackling and rickety articles of the old Confederation which were superseded. And this delusion and ignorance of the import of his labors must have followed and possessed the "Father of his Country" all through the eight years of his illustrious administration of the Federal Government; for, in his farewell address, he says to his countrymen:

"To the efficacy and permanency of your Union, a Government for the whole is indispensable. No alliance, however strict, between the parts can be an adequate substitute; they must inevitably experience the infractions and interruptions which all alliances in all times have experienced. Sensible of this momentous truth, you have improved upon your first essay, by the adoption of a constitution of government better calculated than your former for an intimate union, and for the efficacious management of your common concerns. This Government, the offspring of our own choice, uninfluenced and unawed, adopted upon full investigation and mature deliberation, completely free in its principles, in the distribution of its powers, uniting security with energy, and containing within itself a provision for its own amendment, has a just claim to your confidence and your support. Respect for its authority, compliance with its laws, acquiescence in its measures, are duties enjoined by the fundamental maxims of true liberty. The basis of our political systems is the right of the people to make and to alter their constitutions of government. But the Constitution which at any time exists, till changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole people, is sacredly obligatory upon all. The very idea of the power and the right of the people to establish Government presupposes the duty of every individual to obey the established Government."

But this fiction of secession, I repeat, strikes at the fundamental idea of a national government. It completely emasculates it and leaves a barren inanity. It is now giving terrible illustration of the consequences portrayed by Washington. Behold how again, in the language of his letter to Warren, which I have just read—

"By such a policy as this the wheels of Government are clogged, and our brightest prospects, and that high expectation which was entertained of us by the wondering world, are turned into astonishment; and from the high ground on which we stood, we are descending into the vale of confusion and darkness."

The old Articles of Confederation are headed "Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union between the States;" and they are concluded in these terms: "And that the union shall be perpetual." The preamble to the Constitution declares that one of its principal purposes is "to form a more perfect union." How is all this consistent with the principle of peaceable, discretionary secession? Sir, in the language of General Jackson, in his message of 16th January, 1833—

"The right of the people of a single State to absolve themselves at will, and without the consent of the other States, from their most solemn obligations, and hazard the liberty and happiness of the millions composing this Union, cannot be acknowledged. Such authority is believed to be utterly repugnant both to the principles upon which the General Government is constituted and to the objects which it was expressly formed to attain."

Equally repugnant to this doctrine of secession are the powers vested in the General Government

by the express terms of the Constitution. The Constitution expressly vests in the General Government all the fundamental functions of complete national sovereignty. By section eight of article one, among other attributes of sovereignty, power is conferred on Congress

"To levy and collect taxes, duties, imposts, and excises.  
 "To regulate commerce with foreign nations, and among the several States.  
 "To coin money, and regulate the value thereof.  
 "To declare war, and grant letters of marque and reprisal.  
 "To raise and support armies.  
 "To provide and maintain a navy.  
 "To make treaties."

And, as if the framers of the Constitution were apprehensive of future assumptions of authority upon the part of the States, incompatible with the exercise of this national sovereignty, they did not rest satisfied with conferring these positive powers on the General Government; but they also, by negation, expressly prohibited the exercise of such powers by the States. So, in article one, section ten, of the Constitution, it is provided, among other restrictions, that

"No State shall enter into any treaty, alliance, or confederation; grant letters of marque or reprisal; coin money; emit bills of credit," &c.

And finally, as if to exclude all controversy, it is ordained in the second section of article six, as follows:

"This Constitution, and the laws of the United States which shall be made in pursuance thereof, and all treaties made, or which shall be made, under the authority of the United States, shall be the supreme law of the land."

The advocates of this right of discretionary secession do not pretend that it is either expressly or impliedly reserved in any clause of the Constitution; but they allege the right is inferrible from the manner in which the Constitution was ratified by the States; that it was ratified by the States distinctively in their sovereign capacities as States; and that, therefore, the Constitution is a mere compact between sovereign States, and is in fact nothing more than the terms of a league between independent sovereignties, liable to be dissolved at the pleasure of any of the parties to it. All this is mere assumption. Not so did Mr. Madison, the great artificer of the Constitution, understand his own handiwork. He says:

"It was formed by the States—that is, by the people in each of the States, acting in their highest sovereign capacity; and formed consequently by the same authority which formed the State constitutions."

And again he says:

"Nor is the Government of the United States, created by the Constitution, less a Government in the strict sense of the term, within the sphere of its powers, than the governments created by the constitutions of the States are within their several spheres. It is, like them, organized into legislative, executive, and judiciary departments. It operates, like them, directly on persons and things; and, like them, it has at command a physical force for executing the powers committed to it."

And the form and mode of submission of the Constitution for ratification are repugnant to the idea of a mere compact or league between the States in their distinctive sovereign capacity. Look at the preamble to it. It does not commence, we the



States; nor, indeed, we the people of the States respectively do ordain and adopt the following compact or league. No, it speaks out honestly and to the purpose. It plainly and broadly declares: "We, the people of the United States, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

Why, sir, this device of anarchy and confusion was exploded in the very beginning. Some of the jealous devotees of State rights, apprehensive of the overshadowing power of the central Government, started the idea of a conditional adoption of the Constitution, reserving the right to withdraw if it should afterwards appear to be necessary. Hence, Mr. Hamilton wrote to Mr. Madison, inquiring if it would be competent to do so. What was Mr. Madison's answer? Mr. Madison then, just fresh from his labor of framing the Constitution, in 1788, replied as follows:

"The Constitution requires an adoption *in toto* and forever. It has been so adopted by the other States. An adoption for a limited time would be as defective as an adoption of some of the articles only. In short, any condition whatever must vitiate the ratification. What the new Congress, by virtue of the power to admit new States, may be able and disposed to do in such a case, I do not inquire, as I suppose that is not the material point at present. I have not a moment to add more than my fervent wishes for your success and happiness. The idea—and these are the words to which I wish particularly to refer—of reserving the right to withdraw was started at Richmond, and considered as a conditional ratification, which was itself abandoned as worse than rejection."

Where, then, can this extraordinary right of secession find its predicate? Verily, it is said, in the resolutions of the Virginia and Kentucky Legislatures, passed 1798-99, and 1800. It would be more to the point to refer to the Constitution itself. The Legislatures of Virginia and Kentucky were, no doubt, very respectable bodies; but they were not the parties who made the Constitution; nor can their resolves supersede the Constitution. But it is alleged that Mr. Madison, who was in fact the father of the Constitution, was also the author of the resolutions of 1798-99; and that therefore these resolutions are, in fact, his exposition of State rights under the Constitution. Did Mr. Madison mean, by his enunciation, in these celebrated resolutions, of the right of State interposition in certain contingencies, that a State had a right to withdraw from the Union? I answer, no. If Mr. Madison, as the principal framer of the Constitution, is authority for the correct exposition of the Constitution, let the same rule apply to him as the author of the resolutions. And here I cite him as authority that he never designed by these resolutions to enunciate any such power in the States, both on the grounds of his intelligence as a statesman and his integrity as a man of truth. He has said he meant to enunciate no such principle. He has repeatedly so declared—in his letters to Mr. Everett, Mr. Cabell, Mr. Stephenson, and Mr. Trist. And yet his great name is persistently paraded before the public as sanctioning the pestilent principle of secession!

The truth is, the assumption of the right of a State to withdraw from the Union of its own accord, and without reference to the will or the wishes of any or of all of the other States in the Union, has only found champions bold enough

to avow it within the last few years. Even Mr. Calhoun himself, so late as 1844, declared:

"That each State has a right to act as it pleases in whatever relates to itself exclusively, no man will deny; but it is a perfectly novel doctrine that any State has such a right when she comes to act in concert with others in reference to whatever concerns the whole. In such cases, it is the plainest dictate of common sense, that whatever affects the whole should be regulated by the mutual consent of all, and not by the discretion of each."—*Calhoun's Letter, declining nomination, to Baltimore Convention in February, 1844.*

At the time of the passage of the resolutions of 1798-99, the construction now placed upon them was not dreamed of. Mr. Wirt, then in the vigor of youthful manhood, and the ardent admirer and personal and political friend of Mr. Madison and Mr. Jefferson, writes to Judge Carr, of Virginia, under date of January 6, 1833:

"As to the right of a State to secede from the Union, I do not recollect to have ever heard it made the subject of discussion in the high times of 1798-99 and 1800, and consequently never heard the denial of the right to secede treated as a high Federal doctrine." "Mr. Madison's and Mr. Jefferson's resolutions were not for secession—they were appeals to the other States, and looked no further than the repeal of the laws," &c.

That Mr. Wirt is entirely correct in this assertion there can be no doubt. Other cotemporaries and cotemporaneous events corroborate the statement of Mr. Wirt. For instance, at a festival held by the presidential electors of Mr. Jefferson, in 1800, at the city of Richmond, there were present some of the leading statesmen and exponents of Virginia policy and opinion, and most prominent among the sentiments offered on that occasion was, "secession is treason."

If any journal may be quoted as authority for the views of the State-rights party in Virginia at least, and as reflecting the opinions of Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Madison especially, the Richmond Enquirer was certainly worthy of that distinction. Now we find in the Richmond Enquirer of November 1, 1814, the following:

"No man, no association of men, no State, or set of States, has a right to withdraw itself from this Union of its own account. The same power which knit us together can unknit. The same formality which formed the links of the Union is necessary to dissolve it. The majority of States which formed the Union must consent to the withdrawal of any one branch of it. Until that consent has been obtained any attempt to dissolve the Union, or distract the efficacy of its constitutional laws, is treason—treason to all intents and purposes."

Thus, it seems to me that these celebrated resolutions afford no warranty for the "right of a State to withdraw itself from the Union of its own account;" and the pretense for peaceable, irresponsible secession, predicated upon them, dissolves from view, "like the baseless fabric of a vision;" and the secession of the States now in arms against the Government, stripped of its specious disguises and sophistries and garniture of falsehood, stands forth in its true character—"treason to all intents and purposes"—a willful, unprovoked, diabolical conspiracy against the best Government God ever vouchsafed to man, and against the last cherished hope of constitutional liberty in the world.

Sir, it will require the concentrated and accumulated indignation of centuries to denounce, in terms of commensurate severity, the monstrous



sin and turpitude of this rebellion. It is a crime against the human race. It has no shadow of apology. The false pretenses of its authors and abettors will not avail to shield them against the coming execration of mankind. Even Calhoun was constrained to admit, in his letter to General Hamilton in 1832, that—

“With institutions every way so fortunate, possessed of means so well calculated to prevent disorders, and so admirable to correct them when they cannot be prevented, he who would prescribe for our political disease disunion on one side, or coercion of a State, in the assertion of its rights, on the other, would deserve, and will receive, the execrations of this and all future generations.”

Sir, truth will ere long strip these conspirators naked before the world, and the people whom they have so cruelly misled will rise up and curse them. History—impartial history—will arraign and condemn them to universal contempt. It will hold them responsible before man and God for the direful consequences already brought upon the country, and for the evils yet to come—for the desolations of war, its pillage, and rapine, and blood, and carnage, and crime, and widowhood, and orphanage, and all its sorrows and disasters.

“All that the mind would shrink from of excesses;  
All that the body perpetrates of bad;  
All that we read, hear, dream of man’s distresses;  
All that the devil would do if run stark mad;  
All that defies the worst which pen expresses;  
All by which hell is peopled, or as sad  
As hell.”

Mr. President, it must remain for some future American Sallust to delineate in terms of adequate execration the causes, instrumentalities, and personages of this wicked rebellion. How far he may find parallels of treason and turpitude in the pages of his Roman prototype, I shall not now pause to inquire. It may not become his duty to portray the character of any American Catiline in colors of moral debasement, as dark and horrible as those which have justly consigned the name of the Roman conspirator to eternal infamy; but the cardinal offense—the treason itself—of the modern patricides will transcend the enormity of the ancient rebels by so much as the blessings and liberty of America excel those of Rome. For if Sallust properly presented, as the most astonishing and deplorable feature of the effort to subvert the Roman republic, the fact that it was instigated at a time when “every nation from the rising to the setting of the sun lay in subjection to her arms, and though peace and prosperity, which mankind think the greatest blessings, were hers in abundance, there were yet found among her citizens men who were bent with obstinate determination to plunge themselves and their country in ruin,” (see Watson’s translation, London, 1852, page 43,) what shall be said of those who, without pretense of provocation, have conspired to destroy the unexampled peace and prosperity of the United States, and to overthrow the wisest and best Government which the annals of history have ever presented to the admiration of mankind?—a Government of which one of the principal conspirators, now vice president of the organized rebellion, said a little more than a year ago—

“That this Government of our fathers, with all its defects, comes nearer to the objects of all good governments than

any other on the face of the earth, is my settled conviction.”—*A. H. Stephens before the Georgia Legislature, November, 1860.*

I come now, Mr. President, to the inquiry, what has produced this rebellion? What is the design of the leaders of the rebellion in attempting to destroy the Government? We have seen that there has been no just cause of dissatisfaction with the Government. It has most successfully accomplished the end of its institution in securing “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” for the citizen, and in “promoting the general welfare.” We have seen that the policy of the Government has always been controlled by the South, and that at the time of the outbreak of the insurrection the administration of the Government was completely within the power of the South and its friends. We have seen that slavery and the rights of slaveholders were secure from any successful aggression by the Republican party or by the General Government. It was no dread of the abolitionists which precipitated the rebellion. Ex-Governor Adams was not singular in the sentiment to which he gave utterance at Columbia, when he declared:

“The abolitionists were our best friends. Thank God for what they have already done.” \* \* \* \* \* “If to-morrow morning they repealed every anti-slavery law, and said they would never whisper the word ‘negro’ again, he would still loose his connection with them.”

We must, therefore, seek for the impelling causes in other considerations. Perhaps they were multifarious and somewhat complex. Perhaps disappointed political aspirations had something to do with the matter. Envy and chagrin at the prosperity of the other sections, the sole and legitimate result of industry, enterprise, and skill, and not the fruits of partial legislative policy, may have exerted their baleful influences; for the tenor of alleged grievances oft-times bore striking resemblance to the complaints which Catiline poured in the ears of his co-conspirators. “Who,” said he,

“Who in the world, indeed, that has the feelings of a man, can endure that they should have a superfluity of riches to squander in building over seas and leveling mountains, and that means should be wanting to us for even the necessities of life; that they should join together two houses or more, and that we should not have a hearth to call our own? They, though they purchase pictures, statues, and embossed plate; though they pull down new buildings and erect others, and lavish and abuse their wealth in every possible method, yet cannot, with the utmost efforts of caprice, exhaust it. But for us there is poverty at home and debts abroad; our present circumstances are bad, our prospects much worse; and what, in a word, have we left but a miserable existence?”

An ungenerous envy of northern thrift may have, in some instances, been productive of prejudice in the southern mind. But why should the South envy the prosperity of the North? Let us rather turn with joy and gratitude to the natural resources of the South, inviting development—a climate unrivalled; a soil as fat as the Delta of the Nile; mines of inexhaustible magnitude and incalculable value; rivers in which navies may ride secure; sea-ports where the commerce of the world may find harbor—all the elements of individual and national prosperity and happiness worthy of the Almighty hand that poured them in such infinite exuberance around us. Fostered and protected by the best Government man ever enjoyed,



and proud of our name and position as American citizens, let us rather be stimulated by the prosperity and success of our neighbors to energy and industry, and show ourselves worthy of the rich gifts which God and nature have so munificently bestowed upon us.

But what was the primary inciting cause of this rebellion? I answer—dissatisfaction with the principles and operation of democratic government. It was hostility to the simplicity and equality of republican institutions. We may not find any direct and unequivocal avowal of this fact on the part of the conspirators. It would be strange if we should. Satan ever approaches his victims as an angel of light. Liberty has always been destroyed in the name of liberty. Despotism is strategic. It fights with masked batteries. All history will attest that encroachments on human rights have generally been made in the guise of freedom and friendship.

Mr. President, I am not before you either as the defender or the denouncer of slavery. Its friends, however, claim that it is necessary to the perfection of any high degree of civilization; that by exempting those who possess slaves from those menial and servile offices inseparably incident to the economy of any condition of society, it affords leisure and means for superior mental and social improvement, and imparts a dignity of character and polish of manners unattainable where slavery does not exist. If this assumption be confined in its application to the slaveholder, it may, to some extent, be true; but how small a proportion of the people of the South own slaves!

Sir, I dare not say, with George Mason, of Virginia, that "every master of a slave is born a petty tyrant," for I am a slaveholder. I despise the vituperation so indiscriminately heaped upon slaveholders by the madness of fanatic abolitionists. They are the worst enemies of the slave in the world. They have already injured him much; and if their policy were carried out it would degrade the slave still below his present position, and entail miseries upon him exceeding the horrors of the slave-ship. It would beggar both master and slave, and demoralize the whole country. Let us leave slavery where the Constitution and laws have placed it, and await the progressive influences of that blessed Christianity, which, in God's own time, shall redeem and regenerate the human race.

But, sir, it may nevertheless be so that slavery does tend to foster in the feelings and mind of the slaveholder sentiments averse to the perfect level of natural and political equality upon which the system of American republican institutions is based. Labor is not so reputable in slaveholding as it is in non-slaveholding communities; and although the laws do not create or tolerate any distinctions predicated upon this fact, we find them existing with a power and influence as inexorable as if they were a part of the Constitution. I remember the startling effect of a passage in the speech which the eloquent Preston, sent as a commissioner from South Carolina to the late Virginia convention at Richmond, made before that body. Said he:

"Southern civilization cannot exist without slavery.

None but an equal race can labor at the South. Destroy involuntary labor, and the Anglo-Saxon civilization must be remitted to the latitudes from which it sprung."

Sir, how I did wish that these remarkable sentences could have reached the ears of the five million laboring inhabitants in the South who own no slaves! Whatever may be the cause of this aristocratic sentiment in the South, and especially in the Gulf States, I shall leave the further discussion of it to philosophers and statesmen. It is the fact that I am at present considering; and that the fact exists, I think, indisputable. It will not be denied that Judge Pratt, of South Carolina, is an eminently able man, and may justly claim to be considered an authoritative exponent of the views of a large portion of the people of his section. In a late elaborate article animadverting upon the temporizing measures of the confederate States, he says:

"The contest is not between the North and South as geographical sections, for between such sections merely there can be no contest; nor between the people of the North and the people of the South, for our relations have been pleasant, and on neutral grounds there is still nothing to estrange us. We eat together, trade together, and practice, yet, in intercourse, with great respect, the courtesies of common life. But the real contest is between the two forms of society which have become established—the one at the North and the other at the South. Society is essentially different from government—as different as is the nut from the burr, or the nervous body of the shell-fish from the bony structure which surrounds it; and within this Government two societies had become developed as variant in structure and distinct in form as any two beings in animated nature. The one is a society composed of one race, the other of two races. The one is bound together but by the two great social relations of husband and wife and parent and child; the other by the three relations of husband and wife, and parent and child, and master and slave. The one embodies in its political structure the principle that equality is the right of man; the other that it is the right of equals only. The one embodying the principle that equality is the right of man, expands upon the horizontal plane of pure democracy; the other, embodying the principle that it is not the right of man but of equals only, has taken to itself the rounded form of a social aristocracy. In the one there is hireling labor—in the other slave labor; in the one, therefore, in theory, at least, labor is voluntary; in the other involuntary; in the labor of the one there is the elective franchise, in the other there is not; and, as labor is always in excess of direction, in the one the power of government is only with the lower classes; in the other the upper. In the one, therefore, the reins of Government come from the heels, in the other from the head of the society; in the one it is guided by the worst, in the other by the best, intelligence; in the one it is from those who have the least, in the other from those who have the greatest, stake in the continuance of existing order."

Mr. President, Judge Pratt is by no means singular in his repudiation of the cardinal principle of democratic institutions—the right of the majority to govern. The constitution of his State confines the political power, in fact, to a comparatively small number; and the fundamental laws of several of the other southern States, including my own, have denied that population or suffrage is the true basis of political power, but secure to property a representation in the Legislature.

Mr. President, Mr. Jefferson enunciated the axiom that "absolute acquiescence in the decisions of the majority was the vital principle of republics." Thus he summed up the argument in favor of adhering to the General Government and preserving it:

"The preservation of the General Government in its whole constitutional vigor as the sheet-anchor of our peace



at home and safety abroad; a jealous care of the right of election by the people—a mild and safe corrective of abuses which are lopped by the sword of revolution where peaceable remedies are unprovided; and absolute acquiescence in the decisions of the majority—the vital principle of republics, from which there is no appeal but to force, the vital principle and immediate parent of despotism.”

But, sir, Mr. Preston, the South Carolina commissioner, to whom I have already referred, delivered a very different message to us last spring, in the Virginia convention. He declared to us:

“In the free States, the simple, isolated, exclusive, sole political principle is a pure democracy of mere numbers, save a scarcely discernible modification, by a vague and undefined form of representation. In these States there can be no departure from this principle in its extreme intensity. The admission of the slightest adverse element is forbidden by the whole genius of the people and their institutions. It is as delicate in its sensitiveness as personal right in England, or slavery in Carolina; it is the vitalizing principle, the breath of the life of northern socialism. The almighty power of numbers is the basis of all social agreement in the northern States. A fearful illustration of this is at this moment exhibiting its results in the Government under which you are consenting to live. That Government was ‘instituted and appointed’ to protect and secure equally the interest of the parts. By the agency of mere numbers, one section has been restricted and another expanded in territory; one section has been unduly and oppressively taxed, and one section has been brought to imminent peril; and in this hour the people of the North are consulting whether they can subjugate the people of the South by the right of number.

“The ‘government by the people’ is equally the rule of the South, but the modification of the ‘rule of numbers’ is so essential in the slave States, that it cannot coexist with the same principle in its unrestricted form. In the South it is controlled, perhaps made absolutely subject, by the fact that the recognition of a specific property is essential to the vitalization of the social and political organisms. If, then, you attempt to institute the rule of either form into the organism of the other, you instantly destroy the section you invade. To proclaim to the North that numbers shall not be absolute, would be as offensive as to proclaim the extinction of slavery in the South. The element of property would neutralize the entire political system at the North; its exclusion would subvert the whole organism of the South.”

This is not the opinion of isolated individuals. It is wide spread in the South. It is already incorporated, in some form or other, in the organic laws of several of the States; and other States are seeking to give it constitutional authority. Thus, in the constitutional convention of Virginia, recently in session, Mr. Stuart, formerly Secretary of the Interior, as chairman of the committee having the subject in charge, made a report, from which I read the following extracts:

“Governments are instituted for the protection of the rights of person and property; and any system must be radically defective which does not give ample security to both. The great interests of every community may be classed under the heads of labor and capital, and it is essential to the well being of society that the proper equilibrium should be established between these important elements. The undue predominance of either must, eventually, prove destructive of the social system. Capital belongs to the few—labor to the many. In those systems in which capital has the ascendancy, the government must, to some extent, partake of the character of oligarchy, whilst in those in which labor is predominant, the tendency is to what Mr. John Randolph graphically described as ‘the despotism of king numbers.’

“In the opinion of your committee no system of government can afford permanent and effectual security to life, liberty, and property, which rests on the basis of unlimited suffrage, and the election of officers of every department of the government by the direct vote of the people.”

Sir, great astonishment has been expressed at the hostility of southern statesmen to popular ed-

ucation. But, sir, we ought not to be surprised at it. Knowledge is power; and to keep the masses in ignorance is a necessary precaution to keep them in subjection. To maintain the oligarchy of the few owning the capital, it is necessary to bind down with the slavish chains of ignorance the many who perform the labor. Hence, Mr. Stuart connects with the recommendations which I have just read, the following:

“This tendency to a conflict between labor and capital has already manifested itself in many forms, comparatively harmless, it is true, but nevertheless clearly indicative of a spirit of licentiousness which must, in the end, ripen into agrarianism. It may be seen in the system of free schools, by which the children of the poor are educated at the expense of the rich.”

Sir, the true reason of this hostility to popular education is hostility to democratic institutions.

I need not remind many of the members of this body with what pertinacity Mr. Calhoun resisted the application of the majority principle to our system of national government, as subversive of the rights of the States. He warred upon this great principle from the time of his Fort Hill address, and before that time, down to the day of his death, in the Senate, in popular addresses, and in labored volumes of essays. Nor need I advert to the mighty influence which this great man exerted on southern opinion. Sir, there is a widespread hostility all through the Gulf States, more especially, to the great fundamental political right of the majority to rule.

It will be remembered, moreover, that the head-spring of this rebellion was in the very State where, in the war of the Revolution, the attachment of the people to the aristocratic institutions of the mother country was the hardest to subdue. This attachment was never wholly extinguished. Flashes of the old aristocratic flame have often gleamed out from the revolutionary ashes, as they did recently, when Mr. Russell was assured by many there that they longed to renew their allegiance to some descendant of the royal family of England. Sir, there is a wonderful “hankering” in South Carolina after the “flesh-pots of Egypt.” By referring to the January (1850) number of the Democratic Review, I find an elaborately-written article, from which I have taken the following extract:

“The formation of the cotton States, with Cuba, into a great cotton, tobacco, sugar and coffee-producing Union, calling forth the boundless fertility of Cuba, and renovating the West India Islands with the labor of the blacks of the southern States, in those hands in which their labor and numbers have thriven so well, and THIS EMPIRE ANNEXED TO BRITAIN, by treaties of perfect reciprocity, giving the latter the command of the eastern commerce by way of Nicaragua, and all the benefits of possession, without the responsibility of slave ownership, would be a magnificent exchange for the useless province of Canada.”

And, sir, I find the following in the newspapers of the day, giving some most significant antecedents of the present distinguished secretary of the treasury of the so-called confederate government:

“I was very much surprised, Mr. Chairman, at the honorable member’s speech from Charleston, [Colonel Meminger,] who said he had rather South Carolina was attached to the Government of Great Britain, as she was previous to the revolutionary war, than to remain a member of this Union. Such an expression neither becomes an American nor a Carolinian, and must have been uttered in



the heat of argument and declamation, without due consideration."—*B. F. Perry in the South Carolina Legislature for 1850-51.*

In an address which this gentleman made before the Virginia Legislature a year or two ago, he uttered sentiments as little in accord with the spirit and genius of our American democracy.

I recently cut from the National Intelligencer—a paper which, by its wise, conservative, and patriotic course through a long series of years, has placed the friends of constitutional liberty under the most lasting obligations—the following short article:

"A NASCENT NOBILITY.—In the number of DeBow's Review for July, 1860, is an elaborate article from the pen of George Fitzhugh, Esq., author of 'Sociology for the South,' and long a prominent advocate of disunion. In the article designated he gives expression to the following aspiration:

"England has once tried to dispense with nobility, and France twice, but each experiment was a failure. In America we have the aristocracy of wealth and talents, and that aristocracy is somewhat hereditary. The landed aristocracy of the South, who own slaves, approach somewhat to the English nobility. Time must determine whether the quasi aristocracy of the South has sufficient power, permanence, and privilege to give stability, durability, and good order to society. It is sufficiently patriotic and conservative in its feelings, but, we fear, wants the powers, privileges, and prerogatives that the experience of all other countries has shown to be necessary."

"If such was Mr. Fitzhugh's fear while the South remained in the Union and under the Constitution, we presume his hopes have considerably risen since the outbreak of the present war, for in the same article he avows a preference for a military government, as being the 'most perfect' known to man, and imputes it as a fault to the Republican party that the more advanced of its number were averse to wars. Mr. Fitzhugh's language under this head is as follows: (It will be seen that he finds the perfection of military government in the fact that it allows 'the least liberty' to its subjects.)

"The most perfect system of government is to be found in armies, because in them there is least of liberty, and most of order, subordination, and obedience."

It is but a short time since Governor Brown, of Georgia, charged upon the leaders of the secession movement in that State a design to establish

"A strong central government, probably preferring, if they did not fear to risk an avowal of their sentiments, a limited monarchy, similar to that of Great Britain, or other form of government, that will accomplish the same thing under a different name."

Only two or three days before the victory of our fleet at Port Royal, Governor Pickens, of South Carolina, closed his message to the Legislature of that State with the following significant intimations:

"As far as the northern States are concerned, their Government is hopelessly gone; and if we fail, with all our conservative elements to save us, then, indeed, there will be no hope for an independent and free Republic on this continent, and the public mind will despondingly turn to the stronger and more fixed forms of the Old World.

"In this point of view I most respectfully urge that you increase the power and dignity of the State, through all her administrative offices, and adhere firmly to all the conservative principles of our constitution."

It were easy to multiply the evidence of hostility among the instigators of secession to what Judge Pratt calls the "horizontal plane of pure democracy." The columns of most of the leading journals in the interest of the rebellion teem with assaults, direct or indirect, upon the great principles of political equality on which our republican institutions are based. I shall not weary the Sen-

ate by any detailed reference to them. I will give an extract from one as an example of many. I have taken the following extract from the Richmond Whig, of June 14, 1861. Speaking of the southern States:

"This vast region, inhabited by a people who are bred from childhood to horsemanship and the use of arms, and who know what liberty is, and love and adore it, is portioned out for subjugation by the disgusting Yankee rauc, who don't know how to load a gun, and look contemptible on horseback. That they may be drilled into respectable military machines by the Virginian, who commands them, is likely enough; but without disjoining the eternal fitness of things and dislocating the order of nature, that they should become capable of empire, is simply absurd. Grant that mere brute force should enable them to overrun the land like a cloud of eastern locusts, their reign would pass with themselves. They possess not one quality that fits them for command. Since their beginning as a nation, and out of all their seething population, they have never yet produced a general or a statesman. That is an effort beyond their ability. But for organizing hotels, working machinery, and other base mechanical contrivances, they are without equals in the world. And the very law of nature which invests them with excellence in those inferior departments of humanity, condemns them to inferiority in those of a nobler and more exalted strain."

Senator Hammond is by no means alone in his conception of the dignity of labor. There are hundreds of thousands who concur in his estimate of laboring men as the mere "mudsills" of society, on which there should be erected an aristocracy, controlling the political power of the State.

Do you ask me, do the masses of the people of the South understand the purpose of the advocates of this subversion of democratic government? Sir, I admit the proportion of the southern people holding these views was, and perhaps still is, greatly in the minority. They consist mostly of slaveholders and their immediate dependents. The number of actual slave-owners in the southern States does not, perhaps, exceed four hundred thousand, and the number of dependents and expectants in interest will not amount to above one million five hundred thousand more. But then it must be considered that these slaveholders are the principal men of wealth, education, intelligence, and social influence. Besides, sir, as I have already said, the aggressions of the few upon the rights of the many are always accomplished under false pretenses. The cry of "southern rights," "southern rights," "southern rights," has been rung in the ears of the people with such ceaseless, vehement importunity, as to create an honest impression on the public mind that grievous and outrageous wrong has been done to southern rights already, and that still further and greater outrages are imminent. Especially has the opinion been propagated that slavery is every where to be abolished in defiance of constitutional guarantees, and the rights of the States are to be sacrificed to the caprices of northern fanaticism. Thus has the "southern heart been fired." Still it may be asked, how could such a meager minority precipitate such a rebellion as now exists if the masses were not cooperating? I ask, what had the people to do in seceding the States out of the Union, and in the organization of the provisional confederate government? What had the people in my own once honored State to do in attaching Virginia to the southern confederacy? Nothing, sir. Nothing.



They knew not when it was done. They knew not that it was in contemplation till after it was done. In secret session, with doors barred against the popular ear, with hearts steeled against the expressed will of the people, the conspirators at Richmond not only withdrew my State from the Union, but transferred her arms and her finances and her liberties to the self-constituted authorities at Montgomery; and before the people knew of the dark infernal deed, the tread of armed legions from the Gulf States was shaking the plains of Virginia, eager to transfer the horrors of war to the Potomac and Ohio—eager to involve my neighbors and friends and kinsmen in the carnage and desolation which they ought to suffer themselves.

Mr. President, I find in the rich and classic pages of Mr. Burke a passage so much in point that I am sure the Senate will pardon me for substituting it in the stead of any further remarks of my own on this topic. It is from one of his letters "On a Regicide Peace." The great statesman had been classifying the people of Great Britain and Scotland. Among them he supposed there were four hundred thousand "political citizens." Of these, he places one fifth, or about eighty thousand, on one side, and the residue on the other. Of the character of the minority he says: "On these no reason, no argument, no example, no venerable authority, could have the slightest influence;" and then, to show the power and influence of such a minority, he proceeds:

"This minority is great and formidable. I do not know whether if I aimed at the total overthrow of a kingdom, I should wish to be incumbered with a larger body of partisans. They are more easily disciplined and directed than if the number were greater. These, by their spirit of intrigue, and by their restless, agitating activity, are of a force far superior to their numbers, and if times grew the least critical, have the means of debauching or intimidating many of those who are now sound, as well as of adding to their force large bodies of the more passive part of the nation. This minority is numerous enough to make a mighty cry for peace, or for war, or for any object they are led vehemently to desire. By passing from place to place, with a velocity incredible, and diversifying their character and description, they are capable of mimicking the general voice. We must not always judge of the generality of the opinion by the noise of the acclamation.

"The majority, the other four fifths is perfectly sound, and of the best possible disposition to religion, to government, to the true and undivided interest of their country. Such men are generally disposed to peace. They who are in possession of all they wish are languid and improvident. With this fault (and I admit its existence in all its extent) they would not endure to hear of a peace that led to the ruin of everything for which peace is dear to them. However, the desire of peace is essentially the weak side of that kind of men. All men that are ruined, are ruined on the side of their natural propensities. There they are unguarded. Above all, good men do not suspect that their destruction is attempted through their virtues. Their enemies are perfectly aware of; and accordingly they, the most turbulent of mankind, who never make a scruple to shake the tranquility of their country to its center, raise a continual cry for peace with France; peace with regicides, and war with the rest of the world is their motto. From the beginning, and even while the French gave the blows, and we hardly opposed the *vis inertiae* to their efforts, from that day to this hour, like inopportune guinea fowls crying one note day and night, they have called for peace."

Mr. President, there is more than one application to be made of this eloquent extract. It not only illustrates the power of an active, unscrupulous minority, but it also aptly describes a party in

our own midst who are eternally clamoring for "peace, peace," when "there is no peace."

Such, sir, are my apprehensions of the purposes of this great rebellion. It is not only treason against the Union and the Constitution, it is treason against universal liberty. And it was for these reasons that I have said we were here to-day in the last intrenchments of liberty, fighting her last battle. And if she perish in the conflict she will sink into a grave from which there will be no resurrection. Shall we conquer? Shall the American people prove themselves worthy of the position in which God and his providence have placed them? What is our response to the demands which the friends of political freedom are making upon us from the uttermost parts of the earth? Is it possible that we have been elevated to this amazing height of national power and glory only that our fall shall be the more fatal and disastrous? Sir, we have no cause of despondency. Twenty millions of loyal people struggling in such a cause as this must prevail; and besides, God reigns. Let the enemies of our American liberty remember that. Let its friends remember it. Let us cherish the blessed truth. And let us be assured that if we are true to ourselves and to the voice of duty which calls us—which is the voice of God—the same providential hand which led our fathers to victory and freedom will guide us still, until our mission is completed in the diffusion and establishment of civil, political, and religious liberty throughout the world.

Our enemies will be foiled. They wish our overthrow. They confidently predict it; but let me say to them, as the bard said to traitors in another land:

"Fond, impious man, thinkest thou yon sanguine cloud,  
Raised by thy power, can quench the orb of day?  
To-morrow he repairs his golden flood,  
And glads the nations with redoubled ray."

Sir, I think the cloud is already breaking. Its fury in the Northwest has been spent on my own native hills. There we see, at least, one spot of blue sky; and that "morrow's sun," soon to pour his cheering light upon our land again, when the "morrow" comes, is tinging the skirts of the receding tempest, and to the eye of the patriot's hope is penciling there the bow of promise and of peace, a new covenant of God for all ages to come, of union, prosperity, and constitutional liberty.

Sir, this Union cannot be dissolved. Nature and Providence forbid it. Our rivers and lakes and mountains and the whole geographical conformation of the country rebuke the treason that would sever them. Our diversities of climate and soil and staple production do but make each section necessary to the other. Science and art have annihilated distance, and brought the whole family of States into close propinquity and constant and easy intercourse. We are one people in language, in law, in religion, and destiny. "Whom God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." The past is glorious—the future shall be sublime.

"No pent-up Utica contracts our powers;  
But the whole boundless continent is ours."